



AGINGWELL LIVINGWELL



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It's a Wonderful Life With a Pet by Your Side

The good news is that Americans are living better these days. Through medical technology, exercise, and diet, people are living even longer and fuller lives than only ten years ago. Unfortunately, this sometimes means that elderly people find themselves outliving loved ones, living far from any family, or living alone. According to The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) however, there is a way to help the elderly find new meaning in their lives, and to offer them a sense of importance by encouraging them to adopt a companion animal from their local shelter.

For years it has been medically documented that companion animals, like dogs, cats, rabbits, and birds, help people live longer and healthier lives. Some of the medical benefits a person can experience from owning a companion animal include lowered blood pressure, decreased stress, reduced bone loss, lowered cholesterol levels, and improved blood circulation.

Pets offer unconditional love and commitment to their owners. They can act as friends, therapists, entertainers, and warm, fuzzy, bundles of joy. Having a pet in an elderly person's life can offer them a sense of well being, a sense of encouragement, and even a reason for living. Being responsible for another life often gives new meaning to the lives of those who are living alone or far from loved ones. Having to care for and provide a loving home to a companion animal also helps elderly people to remain active and stay healthy.

No matter what a person's age, a companion animal can help them age well and live well. But an elderly person may want to consider adopting an older adult animal into their lives instead of a puppy or kitten or rambunctious "teenage" pet. Older pets are more likely to be calm, already housetrained, and less susceptible to unpredictable behavior. Older pets are often more easily physically managed by elderly persons than a stronger, more excitable younger animal; yet older pets still confer the same medical and emotional benefits onto their owners as younger animals do.

Animal shelter staff can help potential adopters find the most suitable animal for their lifestyle, ensuring a great match between pet and person. For more information on the many benefits of owning companion animals, be sure to visit The HSUS' website at www.hsus.org/petsforhealth.



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For more information on how to find your next pet, visit www.hsus.org/pets; for help in finding pet-friendly rental housing, visit www.rentwithpets.org; and for behavior advice and help with pet allergies, visit www.petsforlife.org.

